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District 1199 New England
Before the Finance Committee

In Support of **HB 5673 AN ACT CONCERNING THE REFORMATION OF CERTAIN TAXES AND TAX EQUITY**

Good Morning Senator Fonfara, Representative Horn and members of the Committee, my name is Chris Juliano and I'm a supervising nurse at DCF Solnit South. My assigned unit is the Passaic unit but it's currently closed due to nurse shortages. I am here today to ask that you pass House Bill 5673.

DCF Solnit South provides the highest level of care in the state for children with acute mental health needs. What we do here is different from any other hospital. We are set up for longer term care of children. Since the kids are here for longer, we're able to develop relationships and create treatment plans that have a long term goal. Our facility gives the kids we care for more chances for successful outcomes and that is not available anywhere else. These kids are the most vulnerable kids with the most severe mental health issues who can't function in other settings. They come to us after spending multiple days in ERs and hospitals. When we close units for short staffing, every other care setting gets backed up, and then kids are waiting even longer in ERs, or hospitals, or community placements waiting for a bed to open at Solnit South. We are currently operating at 48% capacity, with 3 units that are offline - 2 of which were taken offline in the last 3 years due to the staffing shortages. We currently have over 32 nurse vacancies.

Our state budgets have underfunded the programs and services our residents need—taking resources away from our communities. In the last 20 years, our state workforce has already been shrunk by over 20% from layoffs, privatization, and attrition. Which doesn't account for the 7.6% decrease in Connecticut public employees that we saw during the pandemic and the 4,500 retirements we've seen since the start of 2022. This creates a state where hundreds of thousands of working people are struggling to raise families and our communities are suffering from a massive crisis of unmet need. Together we have the resources to create a state where every single person has a good job to support their families, and a safe place to call home.

Lawmakers can fund a Recovery For All by passing a package that looks forward and provides relief to those who are struggling. Please pass House Bill 5673. Thank you for your time.